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INTELLIGENCE MEMORANDUM

Chen Yi's Press Conference

1. Chinese Foreign Minister Chen Yi's violent and wide-ranging press conference in Peking on 29 September reflects a general hardening of the Chinese foreign policy position and suggests that the Chinese Communists are responding defensively to a series of recent reverses with a display of truculent defiance. There are indications that a high-level party meeting has been going on in Peking and it seems likely that Chen's remarks mirror decisions reached during discussions between top party leaders.

2. Such gatherings usually review domestic as well as foreign policy issues, but any meeting at this time probably would concentrate on major problems in foreign policy, such as recent developments in Vietnam, the damage suffered as a result of China's heavy handed involvement in the Kashmir crisis, and the diminishing prospects for a Chinese-dominated Afro-Asian conference in November.

3. Chen appears to be lashing out at the frustrations caused by these problems in an attempt to refurbish the image of a formidable and resolute China--dimmed by Peking's failure to follow through on threats connected with the Kashmir crisis and the war in Vietnam. NCNA still has not broadcast the text of Chen's four-hour meeting with foreign and domestic newsmen, nor commented on his statements beyond the brief initial report that the Foreign Minister had discussed several important foreign policy matters. This may reflect reluctance to have his remarks included in Peking's formal public record until their effect has been assessed. Editorials in People's Daily and Red Flag today and a speech by Chou En-lai on the eve of the 1 October National Day celebrations follow Peking's standard hard line but do not echo Chen's more violent tirade.

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4. Available foreign press reports of what Chen had to say differ somewhat in emphasis and tone but they are in general agreement concerning the substance of his remarks.

5. Apparently in response to a question concerning the course of the war in Vietnam, Chen asserted that the fight was going in favor of the Viet Cong and declared that the best answer to US "imperialism" was that North Vietnam had withstood a year of US air attacks. He ruled out foreign mediation of the problem, saying that the Vietnamese question was up to the Vietnamese--adding that China stands "unconditionally" on their side.

6. During his discussion of Vietnam, Chen stated that he hoped the US would attack China "tomorrow" so that it could be "thoroughly wiped out." He invited the British, Indians and Japanese to join in the attack, and extended his defiance to include the Soviet Union by declaring that a few million "puppet" troops would not be enough even if the "revisionist leaders in the north combine with them."

7. This is the furthest a senior Chinese leader has gone in publicly commenting on the lengths to which Moscow might go in cooperating with the US against China. Chen removed some of the sting of his public comment, however, when he quickly added--according to one account--that the Soviet Party and people "will not allow the Soviet Union to make such a decision."

8. Chen stated that "we have been making preparations on the assumption that the US may invade China tomorrow" and declared that these preparations are completed. He added however that it appeared that the "US generals have not yet decided to start a war." This is a reiteration of previous statements and carries the implication that any Sino-US conflict would be the result of a US attack on China and not the reverse.

9. Commenting on the war between India and Pakistan, Chen declared that China did not hope for an extension of the conflict, but said that if it did expand Peking would give Pakistan "full moral, political and material support." The Chinese have previously pledged backing for Pakistan but this is the first time Peking has made such an explicit public statement concerning material support.

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10. Chen raised Peking's price for accepting a seat in the UN by demanding a retraction of the resolution condemning China for aggression in the Korean War, a review of the charter, admission of all "independent" countries, and expulsion of all "imperialist puppet states" as prior conditions. This spells out at least part of what Peking means by the UN "reorganization" the Chinese have previously declared was required.

11. Chen's remarks concerning the second Afro-Asian conference, still scheduled to open on 5 November in Algiers, suggest that Peking has decided that a meeting held under present circumstances would not serve Chinese interests and is preparing the way for a postponement or cancellation. Information concerning Chen Yi's conversations during his trip to Africa and the Middle East early this month indicates that the Chinese have encountered serious problems in their efforts to exclude the Soviet Union and to prevent UN Secretary General U Thant from attending.

12. Chen demanded "assurance of success in advance" as the price of Chinese support for the Algiers conference and said that prior agreement to condemn "American imperialism" was a key element. He declared that China was violently opposed to Soviet participation and asserted that inviting a UN representative was tantamount to inviting a "proxy of the United States" and would not be acceptable to Peking.

13. On the subject of nuclear proliferation, Chen expressed the hope that more Afro-Asian nations would develop their own nuclear weapons on a "do it yourself" basis. He reportedly declared that China had made contacts to discuss the sharing of atomic information, but only for peaceful purposes, and said that no one had yet asked China for help in developing a military nuclear capability. These comments may have been designed to parry pressure from Djakarta for assistance in developing an Indonesian nuclear capability, or for a Chinese-supplied nuclear device to be exploded on Indonesian soil.

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CHEN YI'S PRESS CONFERENCE

DIRECTORATE OF INTELLIGENCE
Office of Current Intelligence

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